

Canal's potential for recreation is worth enhancing

We're hardly alone in wondering why there has been no effort to capitalize on the beauty and recreation along the 13 miles of the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal in Delaware. The Maryland portion has its share of canalfront housing. But for the most part, Delaware has steep canal banks, a few fishing piers and some open areas for off-street vehicles. The Summit area near the CSX railroad bridge over the canal — also known as the old canal — has a private marina.

Except by crossing one of the four highway bridges over the canal, people see little of the huge ships from around the world on their way to or from the port of Baltimore, the ospreys, bald eagles and other wildlife, and the scenic marshes on the east end near Delaware City.

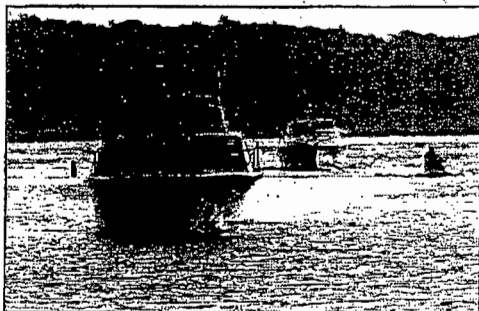
U.S. Rep. Mike Castle has decided the C&D is a wasted federal resource

and would like to see activity to change that. The Army Corps of Engineers, which has an navigation operations station and museum just across the state line in Chesapeake City, Md., owns the canal but has done little to promote public access or recreation other than fishing.

Rep. Castle wants \$150,000 from the corps to study how the canal could become a regional tourist attraction. The first stage of the project would determine the cost and feasibility of making the canal and adjacent land accessible for hikers, bikers, runners, birders, painters and more fishermen. The money would be well spent.

If this is feasible, development would have a big price tag. Estimates are that each mile of a multi-use trail along the canal would cost about \$200,000. That would add up to about \$2.6 million for the project. A visitor center and interactive displays would add more.

Rep. Castle and Sens. Joseph Biden and Thomas Carper should use their influence to see this project through. It could turn the C&D Canal into an attractive travelers' destination and bring welcome economic growth.



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The Chesapeake & Delaware Canal